

# **HIRELINGS OF THE DESERT**

**TRANSJORDAN AND  
THE ARAB LEGION**



**INTRODUCTION BY F. SEYMOUR COCKS, M.P.**

**BY DR. S. ROLBANT**

**PRICE ONE SHILLING**

# **HIRELINGS OF THE DESERT**

## **TRANSJORDAN AND THE ARAB LEGION**

*by*

**SAMUEL ROLBANT**

*with an introduction by*

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AMAL PUBLICATIONS LTD  
Phoenix House, 19-23 Oxford Street, London  
W.1

*Printed by*

NOBLE PRESS, 36 LOWER RICHMOND ROAD, LONDON, S.W.15

*By the same Author*

"THE ARABS - POLITICS AND PEOPLE" (1948)

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# INTRODUCTION

Dr. Rolbant has asked me to write an introduction to his excellent pamphlet "Hirelings of the Desert" and I gladly do so. I write as a whole-hearted supporter of the cause of Israel to which, when I first entered the House of Commons, practically every member of the Parliamentary Labour Party was pledged, and rightly so. For, as the present Secretary of State for the Colonies said in 1939:

"This . . . is largely a conflict between the new order which the Jews stand for in Palestine, and the old crumbling feudal system for which a few rich Arab landlords stand . . . Those of us who have seen the great achievements of the Jews on the spot, have realised that the key principles of our great movement have been worked out by the Jews. There you have had co-operation, extension of the social services, reclamation of marshes, the planting of forests, the construction of great public works, all in the interests of the Palestine people, whether Jew or Arab, and we feel it would be a great betrayal for that experiment to be brought to an end."

No fewer than 11 annual conferences of the Labour Party have supported the cause of Israel and at the London Conference in December, 1944, only seven months before the General Election, a declaration was adopted supporting the unrestricted immigration of the Jews, stating that they should be allowed to enter "in such numbers as to become a majority" and adding "let the Arabs be encouraged to move out as the Jews move in . . . The Arabs have many wide territories of their own; they must not claim to exclude the Jews from this small area of Palestine, less than the size of Wales."

This declaration was moved by the present Prime Minister and carried by an overwhelming majority. But the Foreign Office has ignored this declaration. It has not encouraged the Arabs to move out. It has supplied them with the arms which have enabled them to march in. Without British arms, says Mr. Morgenthau, a former Secretary of the United States Treasury, the Arab forces could not last a minute.

The struggle in Palestine today is between the Tenth and the Twentieth Centuries. The Foreign Office supports the Tenth Century because it supposes that the Arab Sheikhs—not, as Dr. Rolbant shows, the unfortunate, exploited fellahin — can hold the Middle East against Russia. I have no doubt that many inmates of Colney Hatch share that view. But the fighting strength of the Arabs in a modern War would be negligible and the friendship

of the Arab leaders for Britain is non-existent. During the War Egypt was kept neutral by force, Iraq revolted against us and the ex-Mufti was in Berlin with Hitler. Even the Transjordan Frontier Force, says Dr. Rolbant, mutinied against the British and if the present Government of King Abdullah is friendly — well, we pay it £2,000,000 a year!

On the other hand, the State of Israel represents the scientific achievements of the Twentieth Century. As the U.N. Mediator has said, Israel is a "vibrant reality" and, as Mr. Michael Davidson has written in the "Observer", she is transforming thousands of scattered, frightened people into a responsible happy nation and will soon be making an impressive contribution to world production. She will certainly be a centre of strength and stability in the Middle East. As usual the Foreign Office has been backing the wrong horse. Or rather it has been backing a camel against an aeroplane.

The attempts which have been made in the name of Britain during the last three years to destroy the hopes of Israel fill me with a sense of shame. Dr. Rolbant shows how the Palestine Partition Commission was obstructed and the intentions of the Assembly of the United Nations cast to the winds. He even suggests that the British Government gave up the Mandate on 15th May, 1948, because they thought that the Arab Legion would easily subdue Jewish Palestine. I trust that this is not the case, but, if it is, then I am very glad that the plan failed, and I hope that the State of Israel will defeat all who come up against her, even, if necessary (and I hope it will not be necessary) the Bevin boys of the Arab Legion. It is time that the Foreign Office abandoned its absurd anti-Semitic policy, which does not represent the views either of the British Labour Party or of the British people.

Britain was the first country to support the Zionist cause. There was a sad lapse in 1939 (the year of the Macdonald White Paper) and again during the last three years. Had we consistently supported that cause during this time I feel sure that the knowledge of our previous help and of our sympathy for the great social achievements of the Jewish people in Palestine — so much in line with Labour Party policy at home would have borne refreshing fruit and that between the new State of Israel and Britain there would now be growing up a staunch and lasting friendship. . . . I hope that this may still be achieved. I hope also that good relations will shortly be established between Israel and her neighbours and that the Arab fellahin and the Jewish workers will be able to live side by side in peace. It is with these hopes that I write these lines.

F. SEYMOUR COCKS.

10th November, 1948.

# THE COUNTRY AND ITS ECONOMY

## TERRITORY.

Transjordan consists of the part of Palestine situated east of the River Jordan, from Yarmuk in the north to the Gulf of Aqaba in the south. It consists of an elevated plateau varying in altitude from 500—1,500 metres, which terminates in the west with the rift formed by the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea and the Aqaba, and in the east merges gradually with the expanse of the Syrian Desert. The total area of the country is approximately 90,000 sq. kilometres, of which about 72,500 sq. kilometres, that is about four fifths, are steppe and desert. This arid zone covers the whole eastern part of Transjordan and is only interrupted by a few major oases and small water points. Occasional showers flood the wadis in this region for several days a year and incidentally provide water for the growth of nutritious herbs which maintain the goats, sheep and camels of a sparse nomad population. But the water obtained from these showers is inadequate for any large scale agricultural development, though probably in certain places sufficient for cultivation of selected drought resisting plants.

## POPULATION.

No reliable information exists on the population of Transjordan, but when rationing was introduced there in August 1943 some 305,000 people obtained food ration cards. However, it is thought that a figure of 340,000 is more probable in view of the fact that a number of people refrained from registration for fear of conscription or a new system of taxation. The average density of population for the whole of Transjordan works out at about 4 per square kilometre, which is indeed a very low average when compared with that of the more developed neighbouring countries.

The urban population of Transjordan is small and there is little to distinguish many of the town dwellers from country people, either in mode of life or occupational activities. Out of the 12 existing municipalities only Amman, Es Salt, Irbid and Kerak, with a combined population of 75,000 may be regarded as urban centres and even these include a considerable rural

population. 90% of the inhabitants of Transjordan consists of Arabs. The rest is made up of various national minorities, such as the Shishans, Circassians and other Caucasians who emigrated to Transjordan after the Russian conquest of the Caucasus in 1864.

## HEALTH.

Though from a climatic point of view Transjordan is a salubrious land, the low standard of life is reflected in public health and chiefly in the disturbing prevalence of tuberculosis. This is especially true of the Bedouins, among whom also deficiency diseases, like scurvy and xerophthalmia, rank high as a cause of sickness, incapacity and death. In times of scarcity people were sometimes driven to eat the pea *Lathyrus sativus* which is grown for oxen and camels, a number of unfortunates then being afflicted by an incurable paralysis of the limbs.

Among communicable diseases malaria takes an important place, the main sources of infection being the Jordan Valley and the Azraq Marshes. Lack of funds prevents the Government from doing much towards amelioration, but local measures for the control of anopheles and anti-malaria measures on medical lines are regular features of the activities of the Health Department. Of venereal diseases, hereditary syphilis is found among the nomadic population in the south, but, due to the influence of the sun and the frequency of malaria infection which prevent it from developing into the more advanced stages, it appears mostly in a harmless form. It may be noted in this connection that there is no hospital for mental diseases in Transjordan, the more dangerous cases being accommodated in prison.

Eye diseases are widespread throughout Transjordan. Recent examination of school-children has shown about every fourth child to suffer from trachoma, which is particularly prevalent in Circassian villages, where in some cases over 50% of the population is affected. As to the incidence of intestinal diseases no precise information is available, but they are frequent especially among young children, and largely account for the high infant mortality rate.

Though the number of members of the medical profession has increased in recent years, it is still insufficient to meet the needs of the population. In 1943 only 30 physicians held medical licences.

## EDUCATION.

The proportion of literate persons is extremely low among Transjordanians. The older generation of cultivators is practically illiterate, education among the rural population being a new development of the last 20 years. Even among the younger people literate Moslem girls are an exception since distrust and disapproval of female education is still deep-rooted among their families. Elementary education is neither compulsory nor universal. Lack of public funds prevents the provision of educational facilities for all children and in recent years no more than 50% of the applicants could be admitted into Government schools.\* The country possesses only one newspaper, a small sheet that appears intermittently.

## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS.

Transjordan is fundamentally an agricultural country and farming is the main occupation of its inhabitants. Of food-stuffs only "luxuries" like sugar, tea and coffee are imported. The country otherwise supports itself, while exports consist almost in their entirety of agricultural produce. The cultivation of wheat and barley in winter and of millet in summer are the principal activities of the farming community, whose "prosperity depends entirely on the success or otherwise of its cereal crops".†

"Transjordan is in the main an agricultural country where society is still conducted on patriarchial lines. Industries are practically non-existent and it is improbable that conditions will permit industrial development in the future." This extract from the Mandatory's report to the League of Nations puts in a nutshell the situation and prospects of Transjordan's industries. There are no more than a handful of small industrial undertakings in operation, and the number of persons employed is very small. Such industries as exist are mainly of an agricultural character, intended for local consumption and, with few exceptions, carried on at home or in small workshops. Flour milling and olive oil pressing exists in most villages, and weaving and allied crafts operated by hand at home or in the workshops are also quite common. Trade in the modern sense of the word has hitherto played an insignificant part in the economic system

\* See Annual Report 1938 p.362.

† Government of Transjordan: Report Customs, Excise, Trade and Industry, 1943, p.3.

of the country. The self-sufficiency of the fellah and the bedu makes the country largely independent of the market, whose organisation is poor and undeveloped. Shops stock cheap and simple goods.

The Foreign trade of Transjordan in the years 1936-1944 shows an adverse trade balance amounting to a yearly average of about LP.500,000 — LP.1,000,000.\* The gap has hitherto been covered by invisible exports, among which the grant-in-aid by the British Treasury and financial assistance from the Palestine Government took a leading part. These assets are of purely political and not economic nature, and the adverse trade balance is all the more serious as imports consist almost exclusively of goods for consumption and not of investment goods or raw materials.

Exports to Palestine amounted in 1936-1944 to more than 95% of Transjordan's total exports, which proves strongly the dependence of local agriculture and therefore the country's economy as a whole, on the Palestine market.

### *BUDGET.*

Several public services were performed in Transjordan by foreign agencies. There was, for instance, the Transjordan section of the Hejaz Railway, administered and maintained by Palestine, which had in addition participated in the improvement of roads in Transjordan and the upkeep of certain medical services, etc. The High Commissioner too was paid solely by Palestine although he held a commission for both Palestine and Transjordan, while the cost of the British Resident at Amman and his staff had since April 1934 been charged to Imperial funds. All these expenses did not appear in Transjordan Budget figures, and only one sixth of the cost of the Transjordan Frontier Force was included therein. The Transjordan administration was thus relieved from substantial financial obligations which would otherwise fall to its share.

But the most striking feature in the financing of Transjordan public services may be seen in the fact that in the 20 years period 1924-1944 approximately  $6\frac{1}{4}$  million pounds or more than 50% of the total Government revenue has been received by the Treasury as grants-in-aid from Britain, apart from the smaller amounts from the Palestine Government and the

\* In 1946 with its imports at LP.8,116,000 and exports at LP.2,044,000 (LP.650,000 re-export) Transjordan's deficit rose to LP.5,422,000.

Colonial Development Fund. These grants representing the British Treasury's contribution were made chiefly "to enable Transjordan to cover legitimate expenditure which the territory was unable to meet with its unaided resources."\* The subsidies originally took the form of a single payment for unspecified objects, but a number of grants for special purposes were added to the original general one, in the course of years. The first of them and one that has occurred for thirteen successive years, aggregating to some LP.450,000, was the grant-in-aid for the maintenance of the Transjordan Frontier Force, the military unit that was formed in 1926 from the disbanded Palestine Gendarmerie. At first its cost was borne as to five-sixths by Palestine, but, as a result of Jewish representations, the British Government undertook to bear the cost of equipping and three quarters of the current expenses of the Transjordan Frontier Force. While this undertaking materially changed the position of Palestine in respect of this budget item, Transjordan's position remained unaffected. As before, one-sixth of the capital and maintenance cost of the unit were entered in the Transjordan Government budget, finding their equivalent on the revenue side in special-grants-in-aid from the British Treasury. This arrangement remained in force until 1941 when the Transjordan Frontier Force was placed at the disposal of the British War Office which now fully maintains it.

This method of maintaining Transjordan on the basis of regular subsidies has found many critics among the British public and in circles responsible for the supervision of the Mandate. It was claimed that the country was "a parasite State" and the demand was made that a financial system should be introduced to permit the country to live on its own unaided resources.\*

An analysis of the budget expenditure for 1924/25-1943/44 shows that a more or less uniform rise of expenditure has taken place in different branches of Government activity. Every year expenditure for internal and external security takes the lead, followed by the second group of unproductive expenditure, i.e. the cost of civil administration. In 1943/44 LP.94,358 was spent on education and public health and LP.57,755 on agriculture and irrigation, as against LP.1,869,648 on police and defence, which represents 71% of the budget (LP.2,620,000).

\* Annual Report and Official Gazette 1939 - 1944.

\* M. Rappard in a session of the Perm. Mandates Commission; see Minutes of the 23rd session p.119.

## *MILITARY EXPENDITURE.*

The question may be asked: how is it possible for a poor and under-developed country like Transjordan to spend 71% of its expenditure on defence, which is grossly out of proportion to what any stable government can afford in peace-time? The answer lies clearly in the connection between the growth of British grants-in-aid with the budgetary expenditure of the government of Transjordan. The amount of capital which Britain invested in the defence of Transjordan between 1930 and 1939 was in the vicinity of LP.100,000 yearly. From the sum of LP.160,000 in 1937/38, defence expenditure has risen to LP.380,000 in 1940/41. The following table shows Transjordan's expenditure on defence and education and public health in recent years:

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Police &amp; Defence</i>	<i>Education &amp; Public Health</i>
1941/42	815,071	62,319
1942/43	1,271,317	92,856
1943/44	1,869,648	94,358

The sudden jump in expenditure on police and defence corresponds to the organisation of the first mechanised unit of the Arab Legion, while the raising of the expenditure to the amount of LP.1,271,317 in 1942/43 corresponded to the creation of the second mechanised regiment. In 1943/44 another LP.600,000 were added to make LP.1,870,000. It was for the first time that the public was informed by the Colonial Secretary that the creation of the third mechanised regiment of Transjordan alone had cost the Treasury LP.300,000. During the years 1944/48 the amount of grants-in-aid has risen considerably and amounted roughly to LP.4,000,000 per year. The British statement of Spring 1947 referring to the "round sum" of LP.2,000,000 a year did not cover military supplies and equipment transferred from the British Army to the Arab Legion.

There has been a firm, steady and positive correlation between the development of the Arab Legion and the growth of the Treasury grants-in-aid. When it is remembered that the money spent on public health and education has been relatively small and constant throughout the last 20 years, it becomes obvious that these grants-in-aid were given solely for the purposes of the Arab Legion. The Transjordan Treasury is merely a convenient intermediary which serves to obscure the measure of British financial responsibility for the armed forces of the kingdom of Transjordan.

# THE CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

## UNDER THE BRITISH MANDATE.

Transjordan's existence as a political entity dates from August 1920 when, on the collapse of Feisal's short-lived Syrian kingdom, of which it formed a part, the High Commissioner of Palestine declared to an assembly of Sheikhs and notables at Es Salt that Great Britain favoured a system of local self-government under British tutelage. Three months later Amir Abdullah Ibn Hussein, elder brother of King Feisal, arrived in Transjordan with a small force from the Hejaz, intent on raising the tribes and marching into Syria against the French. He was at Amman when Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, came to Cairo in 1921 to attend a conference on Middle East affairs. At a meeting in Jerusalem between Winston Churchill, Col. Lawrence, Amir Abdullah and Sir Herbert Samuel, High Commissioner for Palestine, the Amir agreed to abandon the contemplated Syrian campaign and to take over the administration of Transjordan under the Palestine Mandate,\* which had been entrusted to Great Britain by the San Remo Conference on April 25th, 1920.

This arrangement was confirmed by the British Cabinet in 1922 on the occasion of the Amir's visit to London and followed a year later by an announcement to the effect that Great Britain was prepared to recognise the existence of an independent government in Transjordan, under the rule of Amir Abdullah, provided such a government was constitutional and placed the British Government in a position to fulfil its international obligations in respect of Transjordan by means of an agreement to be concluded between the two countries.†

The next step towards Transjordan's independence was a treaty with Great Britain signed in 1928, when it was formally laid down that "the powers of legislation and administration entrusted in His Britannic Majesty as Mandatory of Palestine

\* For its terms, finally put into effect on September 29th, 1923, see British White Paper Cmd. 1785 of 1922.

† See Report of the High Commissioner on the Administration of Palestine 1920 - 1925, p.55.

shall be exercised in that part of the area known as Transjordan by His Highness the Amir".<sup>‡</sup>

Under the 1928 treaty the Amir agreed to be guided by British advice in matters such as foreign relations, financial and fiscal policy, exploitation of mineral resources and jurisdiction over foreigners. This advice was exercised through a British Resident at Amman, who acted under the direction of the High Commissioner for Transjordan, who was also High Commissioner for Palestine and resided in Jerusalem. The government of Transjordan was headed by a Prime Minister assisted by a Cabinet of six members which in 1939, with the consent of the British Government, superseded the former Executive Council.

### *THE INDEPENDENT KINGDOM OF TRANSJORDAN.*

It seems clear that at the time of the Balfour Declaration Palestine was understood to include the territory later endowed with a separate identity as Transjordan, and that no action changing the constitutional position of the country could, be taken in Transjordan other than through the medium and with the full agreement of an International authority. Contrary to this, the creation of the kingdom of Transjordan on the 25th of May, 1946, was a unilateral decision of the British Government, taken without consultation with international bodies or any other states. The treaty of alliance between the United Kingdom and the kingdom of Transjordan, whereby Transjordan was recognized as a fully independent state was signed in London on 22nd March, 1946. In the autumn of 1946 and again in September, 1947, Britain made several attempts to secure Transjordan's admission to the United Nations, but each failed owing to the disputed status of Transjordan as a Mandated territory, and the reluctance of the majority of member States to accept the establishment of the kingdom as a fait accompli. Some dissatisfaction was raised in Transjordan against the Anglo-Transjordan Treaty of March 1946, which it was felt turned the country into a vassal of Great Britain, and in January 1948, negotiations began for the revision of the treaty. According to the new treaty, signed at Amman on 15th March, 1948, the British Government is pledged to give generous financial assistance on a basis to be

<sup>‡</sup> See British White Paper Cmd. 3069 of 1928 and, for amendments, Cmd. 4999 of 1934 and Transjordan Official Gazette No. 713 dated July 22nd, 1941.

agreed annually. Each Government agreed to concert defence measures in the event of an "imminent menace of hostilities" and to come to the other's aid immediately in the event of war. The Treaty will remain in force for 20 years. Transjordan agreed, in the military Annex to the treaty, to invite Great Britain to maintain R.A.F. units at Amman and Mafrak, and to give British land forces full transit facilities. An Anglo-Transjordan joint defence board to co-ordinate defence matters was also set up.

### *TRANSJORDAN'S INDEPENDENCE AND THE MANDATE.*

The creation of the independent kingdom of Transjordan under overt British tutelage has been widely criticised as an act incompatible with Britain's international obligation. It must be remembered that Article 25 of the Mandate described Transjordan as "the territories lying between the Jordan and the eastern boundary of Palestine." With regard to these territories, Article 25 gave Great Britain the right "with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations, to postpone or withhold application of such provisions of this Mandate as she may consider inapplicable to the existing local conditions." It was in accordance with this that Great Britain asked the Council of the League of Nations to authorise the non-application of the provisions of the Jewish National Home to Transjordan. The Council agreed, and Transjordan was excluded from the National Home.

The Mandate authorised such exclusions, however, not as a permanent but only as a temporary measure. This is made clear by the text of Article 25 as well as by other provisions of the Mandate. Article 25 authorises the Mandatory "to postpone or withhold," but not to exclude, the application of provisions. The French text is perhaps still more explicit; it speaks of the right "de retarder ou suspendre" the application. "Suspendre" means, without the slightest doubt, a provisional arrangement which leaves things in suspense.\*

This construction of the text corresponds to the whole conception of the Mandate. Article 25 bases the right "to postpone or withhold" the application of those provisions on the fact that the Mandatory may consider them "inapplicable to the existing local conditions". But these conditions were not regarded as

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\*See: Dr. Ernst Frankenstein's "Transjordan: The Legal Position".

unalterable. On the contrary, the Mandatory was invited to alter them.

The Mandatory has indicated that she was quite aware of this. In the treaty of February 28th, 1928, which recognised Amir Abdulla's administration, Great Britain was careful to make reservations as to her "international obligations in respect of that territory"; one of them was the development of the country to such a degree that the extension of the National Home should become possible. But obviously the establishment of Transjordan as an independent State would render this impossible.

In face of these facts it is impossible to reconcile the unilateral recognition by Great Britain of the Kingdom of Transjordan with that "respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law" which is the basic principle of the United Nations Charter.

Palestine, including Transjordan, was not, it must be remembered, British Territory but a country entrusted to British administration. The fact that the League of Nations has ceased to exist cannot alter the position. This is assured by Article 80 of the United Nations Charter. It is not even necessary to invoke this provision. The death of the owner of an estate does not turn his administrator's position into ownership. Great Britain should have continued to administer Palestine with Transjordan on behalf of the successor of the League of Nations or surrender the trust to the United Nations. It may well be that the United Nations would have decided that no independent statehood could be granted to Transjordan until and unless complete sovereignty has been allowed to the whole of Palestine from which Transjordan was separated. Or that the admission of Transjordan to the United Nations Organisation could only be granted after sufficient evidence has been assembled on Transjordan's financial solvency and economic independence.

# TRANSJORDAN'S ARMED FORCES

## THE ORIGIN OF THE LEGION.

The formation of the Arab Legion ante-dates both the Amirate and the present Kingdom of Transjordan, the beginning of the force having been laid at a time when Transjordan was a part of the territory of Palestine under a British Mandate. When the first world war ended and the Jewish Legion was disbanded, the creation of separate defence forces for Jews and Arabs came under active consideration. For political reasons the establishment of a Jewish unit did not materialise, but a modest beginning was made towards the creation of an Arab force. In October 1920 a unit was created comprising 5 British officers and 100 Arabs. A few months later this force was augmented by the addition of another unit based on Kerak which consisted of 2 British officers and 50 Arabs.

The first year of this small body was not attended by great fortune. Trouble was brewing in all parts of Transjordan. In June 1921 the Kura Nahiya of Ajlum District rebelled. The Arab Legion, which was now formed from grants-in-aid received from the British Government and commanded by Col. F. G. Peake, was sent to the district to quell the rebellion. About the same time disorders and uprisings broke out in Kerak and Tafleh. In January 1922 the whole force of the Arab Legion was sent there and, by adopting strict measures, succeeded in restoring order and security. Then the Arab Legion was despatched to the north where it successfully suppressed the Kura troubles in five days.

In September 1923 the Adewan tribe, joined by a large number of Balqa tribes, raised a rebellion against the new authorities, but were subdued again by the Arab Legion and a detachment of the Royal Air Force. In 1922 the Wahabi tribes of Nejd carried out two big invasions against the occupying powers. The first one took place when a party of Wahabis penetrated into the country as far as Al-Tuneib farm, south east of Amman. The second invasion was stronger and more serious. It took place on August 23rd, 1924 when about 5,000 Wahabi tribesmen launched a sweeping attack which carried them within a few miles of Amman. The combined force of the Arab Legion and the Royal Air Force, however, were successful in driving them back across the border.

With the establishment of the Amirate, the Legion's force was substantially increased. The idea of the British Commanding Officer, Peake Pasha was that the legion should be a purely Transjordan force, composed exclusively of the settled population of Transjordan. Peake Pasha's difficulties were in the fact that Transjordan with its small urban population, which was in any case suspicious of British intentions, provided a poor reservoir of manpower. The Arab Legion's only hope lay in its ability to attract some nomad elements inside and outside Transjordan. By 1930 one-third of the Arab Legion, which now numbered 1,000 men, was composed of former Egyptian and Sudanese soldiers who remained in Palestine after the war, and Palestinian Arabs, mainly from Nablus. The Nablusites, however, gave Peake Pasha a great deal of trouble and he was compelled to send most of them home.

### *GLUBB PASHA.*

The arrival of Major Glubb, or as he was popularly known, Abu-Hanik (The Big Jaw), from Iraq where he served as a political officer, marked a turning point for the Arab Legion. As second in command he was instrumental in creating a purely Bedouin force, the Desert Patrol which numbered 150 men. He also helped to build the urban and prison police, which wore Arab Legion uniform and were part of the force. When the second world war broke out he took charge of the Legion whose strength had now been increased to 1,600 men. The problems which beset Glubb Pasha were similar to those which Peake had to face: how to increase the force without drawing on the small settled population of Transjordan. Imperial interests demanded the creation of a larger force which could only be done by opening the service to the tribesmen across the virtually non-existent frontiers with Iraq, Syria, Saudi-Arabia and the Negeb. Absence of registration or any settled principle of classification made recruitment possible for many Syrian and Iraqi soldiers, political refugees from Palestine, Circassians and Druses from the Syrian Desert. The high material standard enjoyed by members of the Arab Legion coupled with their very picturesque and impressive appearance stood in sharp contrast to the general condition of the toiling masses in the Middle East.

### *THE LEGION DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR.*

In the years between 1940—1943 the growth of the Legion was truly spectacular. An intensive campaign was started to get new recruits into the Legion to enable it to perform such

important duties as guarding British installations, camps, aero-dromes and military stores. Parts of the Legion were stationed in Palestine, Iraq and even at the British oil refineries at Abdan in Persia.

Contrary to popular opinion its role in the Iraq and Syrian campaigns was only subsidiary to that of the British. Upon entering Iraq the Legion had in fact exchanged shots with its present ally, the Commander of the "Arab Liberation Army," Fauzi Kaukaji, but without any results until a column of R.A.F. armoured cars appeared on the scene. Later when members of the Desert Patrol entered Iraq with Glubb Pasha, who was sent on a political mission to see whether he could find any loyal elements to the house of Hashim, they clashed with some Iraqi soldiers, who withdrew after losing one man killed. However, their very presence in Iraq had shown to the population that there were Arabs who fought on the British side, which was of great psychological value to the Allies.

During the war and particularly at the time of the pro-Nazi Iraqi revolt, intensive propaganda was carried on in Transjordan on behalf of the Iraqis, and mass meetings and demonstrations took place.\* Concrete assistance was also rendered to the anti-British forces. The Bedu tribes in the desert between Transjordan and Iraq made raids upon workers employed on the oil pipe-lines; the line was cut on several occasions and in a number of places. Attempts were also made to obstruct the movements of British troops despatched to Iraq to suppress the risings.†

The Transjordan Frontier Force mutinied against the British. Some detachments of the Frontier Force which were sent to Iraq to take part in the operations against Kailani refused to march further. They were arrested, disarmed, and sent to Zarqa, the headquarters of the Force. (Berlin radio gave full details of the occurrence the same evening.) They were given the option of leaving the Force without receiving the usual bonuses and gratuities. One whole squadron (numbering 160 men) resigned from the service, with the exception of five who were Circassians or other non-Arabs; nearly all the men of another two squadrons did the same; in all 500 men of the Transjordan Frontier Force either resigned or were discharged.

\* "Al-Wathba".

† "Al-Bilad" of May 28th, 1941.

# THE ARAB LEGION IN PALESTINE

## THE LEGION IN PALESTINE.

When the sections of the Legion were finally withdrawn from Persia and Iraq they were brought to Palestine where more than half of the mechanised strength of the Legion was kept in Haifa, Sarafand, Lydda, Jerusalem and Gaza. Here in Palestine a tactical school was opened for the Legion in Latrun. By 1947 three-quarters of the active strength of the Legion was stationed in Palestine.

The present commander of the Arab Legion, John Bagot Glubb, was promoted from the rank of Major to that of Brigadier in 1941. He was seconded to Transjordan by the Palestine Administration and was officially known as the Assistant Inspector General of the Palestine Police. His present rank in the Arab Legion is that of "Friq" meaning General. It is generally accepted that on May 15th, 1948, the date of the Legion's attack on Jerusalem, he had under him 8 British N.C.Os. and 40 British Officers who commanded the mechanised regiments and filled all the higher posts in the Legion. The General Staff is also composed of British officers and is headed by a British officer who was formerly Transjordanian Consul to Iraq. There are two Transjordanians, whose official rank is that of Deputy Commanding Officers, one of whom is Ahmad Sidky Bey al-Jundy, who took a military course in England in 1947. The general impression is, however, that this is a purely honorary rank with no practical significance. In reality Al-Jundy commanded one of the two groups stationed in and around Haifa, while the real Deputy Commander was Col. R. J. C. Broadhurst, who also figured among the high officers of the Palestine Police, although a short while ago he was officially referred to as the "Military Adviser to His Excellency King Abdullah".

Much has been said about the legal status of the British officers who lead the Arab Legion. It is interesting to recall Glubb's own conception of the status of the British officers, given in a press interview with U.P. correspondent Robert Miller on 17th November, 1947. He said that although he was not connected with Britain in any way except that he was a British

subject, many of his officers were on leave from the British Army to serve in Transjordan as instructors. "If England recalled them because of hostilities between the Arabs and the Jews they would be forced to return home or face court martial. Of course I am a British subject and if London ordered me back I probably would obey".

According to the definition of the Foreign Secretary given in the House of Commons, all British officers fall into the following categories: regular officers seconded, who amount to about half; Palestine Police, 3; and ex-British officers on contract with the Transjordan Government, who account for the balance which is about one-third. Among the other officers of the Arab Legion, there is a significant number of Circassians and Shishans, particularly in the King's Mounted bodyguard. There are also many Druses, Armenians and Palestine Arabs. This indeed sustains the conviction that the Legion is not a national army of Transjordan where there is no conscription, but is a professional army of mercenaries from all over the Middle East, provided and paid for by the British Government. As Geoffrey Hoare the News Chronicle correspondent writing from Amman on 27th November, 1947 remarked, "Without this subsidy Abdullah could not maintain this force for a week."

### *STRUCTURE OF THE ARAB LEGION.*

According to available information the Arab Legion at the time of the invasion of Palestine was composed of three major parts:

- (a) Mechanised brigade. This force consisted of three battalions, two of which were stationed in Palestine and a third in Transjordan. The strength of each battalion was estimated at 800/900 men apart from small auxiliary units. The Manchester Guardian Special Correspondent described this Mechanised Brigade as "the most un-Arab section in character of the whole force".\*
- (b) Infantry garrison groups, about 15 companies, and two security companies.
- (c) Training centre near Amman. New recruits formed about 20 to 25 per cent of the total strength of the Legion.

Each mechanised battalion consisted of one staff company, one armoured company and two companies of motorised in-

\* Manchester Guardian 24th December, 1947.

fantry, mounted on trucks and armed partly with automatic weapons (Bren guns) and about six Bren-carriers per company. The Bren carriers had armour plate of 8 mm. and two Bren guns. The armoured companies had about six heavy armoured cars each. The heavy armoured cars had a frontal plate of 20-25 mm., a two-pounder artillery piece and two Browning machine guns (.30). Some armoured cars were adapted for mortar use. There was also some heavier armour with six-pounders (2½ inches) and 75 mm. guns. There was no indication that the Legion had tanks.

Each mechanised battalion had an artillery unit armed with a limited number of 3.7 inch pack Howitzers, 25 pounders, and an unknown number of 6 pounders, PIAT anti-tank guns and 3 inch mortars.

The infantry units were armed with rifles (Enfield) and sub-machine guns, in the ratio of 70 to 30. There were at least two machine guns and one 2 inch mortar per infantry platoon. The total strength of the infantry was estimated at 3,500. The Legion was very poor in auxiliary services (medical units, engineers, etc.), for which it depended on the British forces. Altogether the regular force of the Legion did not exceed 8,500 apart from the bodyguard trooper company and the Desert Patrol which numbered less than 1,000. The latter two units were not available for action outside Transjordan.

The Arab Legion had no aircraft, but plans have been worked out to send young Transjordanians to study in R.A.F. schools in England. Apart from the Legion's own training schools in Transjordan, the officers were being trained at the expense of the Government of Palestine in Latrun (15 miles from Jerusalem), in British Army training centres in Palestine and in the United Kingdom where they were being sent periodically to complete their studies.

#### *BRITISH SUPPLIES.*

Last March the British turned over to the Legion mines, artillery stores, anti-tank rifles and mortars from supplies in Egypt. Before the British evacuation from Palestine the Legion received from the British sixty armoured cars, 3,500 high explosive mortar bombs, 4,500 smoke mortar bombs, 100,000 rounds of 30-calibre ammunition and 900,000 gallons of petrol. The Legion also received other supplies and was given control of principal military camps. Other stocks transferred to the Legion

by the British before they left Palestine were stated to be sufficient to cover the needs of the Arab Legion for 8 months.

#### *UNEASY RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS.*

On 29th November, 1947, when the United Nations decided upon the partition of Palestine, there were in Palestine two battalions of the mechanised brigade, two infantry battalions and two companies of "The Security Group", altogether numbering between 4,000 and 5,000 Legionaries. The Jewish Agency has repeatedly demanded the immediate withdrawal of the Legion at least from Jewish regions if, for political considerations, it was impossible to remove it altogether from Palestine. As late as 11th May a Jewish Agency spokesman in Jerusalem publicly declared that the bulk of the Arab Legion was still in Palestine and that it did not take much imagination to visualise what will occur if, despite the Government's assurances that they would be withdrawn before the termination of the Mandate, they remained in Palestine.

Even before 29th November, 1947, relations between the Arab Legion and Jewish Palestine were uneasy and the Jews regarded the Legion as a hostile foreign force of occupation. The tension between the Legion and the Jews mounted considerably after November 1947. On December 7th, 1947, the Transjordan Foreign Minister declared to the press in Cairo that the Legion took part in anti-Jewish operations on the Jaffa-Tel Aviv border on December 5th.

On 14th December the Arab Legion had twice attacked Jewish transport at Yazur and Beth Nabal, killing 14 and wounding 10, most of whom were members of Settlement Police — an incident which was later the subject of a Court of Enquiry.

On 20th December a Group Sgt. of the Jewish Settlement Police, and one of the veterans of that force, was shot dead in Jerusalem when walking past Allenby Barracks of the Transjordan Frontier Force.

On 3rd February 5 Jews, including a women passenger, were killed and 20 others injured when members of the Arab Legion attacked a Jewish convoy near the Neveh Shaanan quarter of Haifa.

On 15th February Arab Legionaires attacked Jewish passers-by near Barclays Bank in Haifa, which resulted in 6 Jews being killed and 12 wounded.

On 19th February it was reported that for the third successive

day members of the Arab Legion attacked Jewish property and traffic in Haifa. The Legion erected road blocks throughout Jerusalem holding up all traffic, after a number of Jewish buses had been stopped at barriers, the Legionaires killing 3 Jews.

On 25th February Transjordan Frontier Force attacked a Jewish Settlement Police vehicle, 2 Jewish police were killed and three others wounded.

Apart from harassing and attacking Jewish communications, interfering with the movement of Jewish Settlement Police and launching heavy attacks on Jewish settlements, the Arab Legion has been giving great help to the short-lived Liberation Army of Palestine Arabs. Being in charge of security in areas of southern and eastern Palestine the Legion escorted and protected communications and bridges for local and foreign Arab gangs. It armed Arab villages and made surveys for their fortification. It handed over to the Liberation Army camps and installations evacuated by British forces. On many occasions legionaries joined the Liberation Army with their arms. The New York Times reported from Jerusalem an instance of desertion with arms as early as 13th December, 1947. 7 of the Liberation Army's casualties in the abortive attack on Tirat Zvi (Beisan area) on 16th February, 1948 were identified as legionaries. The "second-in-command" of the Legion and its top Arab officer Abd al Qader Pasha al-Jundi joined, on his return from England, a military committee of the Arab League, which planned the Palestine campaign. He also met Fauzi Kaukji in Damascus on 17th February, when he discussed with the escaped Nazi collaborator plans for a united action against the Jewish State.

It is noteworthy that the British Army was employing 2,000 Arab Legionaries to guard communications during the Army's evacuation from Palestine. The British military law which ruled in certain areas, including Haifa Port, provided for the protection of the Legionaries who came under the special category of foreign troops. This indeed placed a section of the Arab Legion in a position where it could freely attack without being in any way accountable for its actions.

#### *PROMISE TO WITHDRAW THE LEGION BEFORE THE TERMINATION OF THE MANDATE.*

The Palestine Government has justified its retention of the Transjordan Legion in Palestine on the grounds that "so long as Jewish attacks on the British continue, the Government must use

all the forces at its disposal to protect its installations". (Security review issued by the Palestine Government on 22nd December, 1947.)

It will be seen that even when generous allowances are made for this unwarranted and broad generalisation (since the Arab Legion was not fighting terrorists but indiscriminately attacking Jewish convoys), this statement is remarkable for its implications. It implied, first of all, that the laying down of the Mandate and the ending of British authority in Palestine would automatically mean the withdrawal of an armed force designed for the protection of that authority.

This indeed was the British Government's own interpretation of its declarations in respect of the Arab Legion. On 28th November, 1947, a Foreign Office spokesman said that "the decision to withdraw all forces, including the Legion which was borrowed from Transjordan, had not been changed". In January 1948, Mr. A. V. Alexander, Minister of Defence re-affirmed this when he said in the House of Commons that it is the British Government's intention to complete the evacuation of its military forces from Palestine as declared, including units of the Transjordan Legion in Palestine. Later when Mr. B. Janner, M.P., asked the Secretary of State for War what units of the Arab Legion were still stationed in Palestine, and if he will give an assurance that no troops of the Arab Legion will be stationed at places where invasion from Arab States has been threatened, Mr. Shinwell answered: "Any units of the Arab Legion still in Palestine are under the command of the General Officer Commanding and their stationing is entirely a matter for his decision. All such units are to leave Palestine before the termination of the Mandate." When the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was asked in the House of Commons what the position of the Arab Legion would be on the termination of the Mandate for Palestine, Mr. Bevin replied: "The intention is that its withdrawal from Palestine should be completed before the termination of the Mandate." Similar statements were made by Britain's representative at Lake Success as late as May 1948. The promises given by His Majesty's Government about the withdrawal of the Arab Legion, carry with them one significant corollary. They testify to the fact that the British Government was supremely conscious of its responsibility for the Arab Legion, for it would be quite improper for any Government to give

pledges of withdrawal of an armed force unless they regarded themselves as being in direct control of that force, so that any disclaimer of responsibility for the subsequent behaviour of the Arab Legion in participating in the Palestine war must be based on the validity of two assumptions: firstly, that His Majesty's Government was unaware of the intentions of the Arab ruler of Transjordan; secondly, that the treaty of March 1948, signed between Britain and Transjordan, left the high contracting parties with freedom of action such as was exemplified by the Palestine campaign.

### *KING ABDULLAH'S THREATS.*

The first assumption cannot be maintained in good faith in any reasonable quarter. From the time the United Nations decided upon the partition of Palestine the Transjordan monarch has been treating the world to a welter of declarations about his future intentions. These numerous declarations, even when generous allowance is made for their romantic extravagance ("I shall fight to the last Arab", 2nd May, 1947, Sunday Dispatch), have been quite unambiguous in their meaning. On 26th November, 1947, in a statement to foreign correspondents King Abdullah said he would not "stand idly by if the United Nations decide on the partition of Palestine." On 24th November he told British and American newspaper correspondents in his winter residence at Shaneh that "the Transjordan Army will remain in the Holy Land regardless of any British withdrawal, in order to be at the disposal the Arabs of Palestine in case of need." On 17th December, 1947, King Abdullah interviewed the American journalist Edward Mowrer, declaring that the "Arab Legion would remain in Palestine after the British withdrawal." "Palestine," said Abdullah to a party of French newspaper correspondents on 24th December, 1947, "is our only outlet to the sea and is part of ourselves." On 16th April, 1948, he declared; "When the British leave Palestine I will fight ruthlessly." (Observer 17th April, 1948). During an inspection of an Iraqi contingent he declared that he would invade Palestine with the Arab Legion and the Iraqi Army after the 15th May. It must be remembered that the attention of the Foreign Secretary has been called repeatedly to the public declarations of King Abdullah of Transjordan that after the 15th May he intended to invade Palestine, and that the Foreign Secretary saw fit to assure the Hon. Members that the Arab Legion would not take any military

action without the consent of His Majesty's Government.

As to the contention that the treaty which the British Government signed with Transjordan leaves the latter freedom of independent military action, it must be remembered that the Anglo-Transjordan Military Alliance provides for exactly the contrary. Para. 3 of Article 1 reads: "Each of the High Contracting Parties undertakes not to adopt in regard to foreign countries an attitude which is inconsistent with the Alliance or might create difficulties for the other party thereto." Article 2 says: "Should any dispute between either High Contracting Party and a third State produce a situation which would involve the risk of a rupture with that State, the High Contracting Parties will concert together with a view to the settlement of the said dispute by peaceful means in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and of any other international obligations which may be applicable to the case." Para. 2 of Article 3 says that: "In the event of imminent menace of hostilities, the High Contracting Parties will immediately concert together the necessary measures of defence." The treaty also provides "for the formulation of agreed plans in the strategic interests common to both countries", which indeed makes any war-like action that is independent of, or inconsistent with, His Majesty's Government well-nigh impossible.

## WAR ON ZIONISM.

On 26th April the Transjordan Government declared "war on Zionism". Units of the Arab Legion stationed east of the River Jordan entered Palestine and occupied Jericho, 5 miles from the river. Troops of the Arab Legion, with armoured cars, have taken up positions on both sides of Allenby Bridge, which links Palestine to Transjordan, while Sir Alan Kirkbride, British Minister in Amman persisted in denying these reports. The Palestine Government even issued a statement to the effect that it had no knowledge of any "so-called declaration of war" and that "all Transjordan troops in Palestine are under the control of the General Officer Commanding troops in Palestine and that their conduct is not in question".

On 30th April, the Arab Legion struck at Jisr Mejam, south of Lake Galilee, claiming to have killed 150 Jews and to have occupied the village. On 12th May, the fiercest battle since the beginning of the outbreaks took place at Kfar Etzion, which was being attacked by a force estimated at several thousand and headed by Arab Legion armour, artillery and infantry, and which resulted in the destruction of the Jewish block of colonies.

## AFTER THE MANDATE.

With the end of the British Mandate in Palestine at midnight on 15th May, the last Arab Legion units in Transjordan moved into Palestine. Despatches from Jericho, the Headquarters of the Arab Legion, spoke of the Arabs taking positions in the Judean Hills areas. The Arab Legion units, which were supposed to have been withdrawn, pressed forward to Juflik on the Nablus road. Some units having by-passed Jerusalem reached Latrun and Ramleh on the Tel Aviv road, and captured Lydda airport 12 miles from the Jewish capital, while other Arab Legion forces were driving south of Lake Tiberias. No less than 24 hours after the end of the Mandate, the entire Nablus — Ramallah area was occupied by the Legion. The heaviest Arab Legion force positioned near Nebi Samual, just outside the Holy City, and led by an Englishman, Brigadier Leish, started shelling Jerusalem. The bitter struggle for the Old City of Jerusalem which was subsequently captured by Transjordan Arabs, has been given wide publicity by the British Press although the part which the British Officers have personally played in directing the campaign against Jerusalem has been significantly played down. What has been given even less prominence was the fact that a month earlier Mr. Bevin declared that the Arab Legion would not take any military action without his consent.

# THE POWER BEHIND THE SCENE

## PUPPET STATE.

It is impossible to understand the economic and political realities of Transjordan without a clear appreciation of the one fundamental fact underlying the whole development of the state since its inception in 1920: Transjordan never was, nor is it at present, a free economic or political agent with the power to determine its own policies and build its future in accordance with its own precepts and the wishes and interests of its people.

The economic and military dependence of Transjordan on Great Britain has been amply illustrated in the previous chapters. Grants-in-aid of the British Treasury are the foundation of the budget of the country. It is the British tax-payer who provides the funds for the maintenance of King Abdullah and his retinue, for the equipment and the upkeep of the Transjordan armed forces. According to the treaty of alliance between the United Kingdom and Transjordan, signed in Amman on the 15th March, 1948, the United Kingdom undertook to "provide arms, ammunition, equipment and aircraft and other war material for the forces of His Majesty, the King of the Hashimite Kingdom of Transjordan" as well as to give facilities for the training of its armed forces in the United Kingdom and the Empire. The British Government also undertook to provide the armed forces of Transjordan with "any British service personnel whose services are required to ensure the efficiency of the military units of the forces". Brigadier J. B. Glubb, an Englishman, is the head of the Arab Legion, while all the other important posts, with the exception of a few sinecure positions, are occupied by Englishmen.

If sufficient account is taken of the fact that Transjordan has not even a semblance of representative Government, that the country is ruled by an autocratic king who himself appoints his cabinet and parliament, that every opposition is ruthlessly suppressed or banished from the country (the prominent Liberal leader, Dr. Sibhi Abu Ganinia had to flee the country and live in exile), it must become clear that Transjordan is a puppet state, whose politics are dictated from Whitehall and are guided not by the interests of the Arab masses, but by those of Great Britain as interpreted by the Foreign Office.

## THE BENEFITS OF BRITISH ALLIANCE TO THE ARAB MASSES.

Had the Government of Great Britain been seriously interested in the economic development of Transjordan and in the improvement of the social conditions of the population, its control of the finances and its influence on the administration of Transjordan could have become an important instrument in the advancement of the Kingdom. British influence would have been exercised in the effort to increase the cultivated areas, to irrigate waterless lands and improve agricultural methods. New industries would have been started and roads and railways built. The funds contributed by the British Treasury would have been used for spreading education. The rise in social standards would have stimulated the interest of the people in public affairs and would have educated them towards self-government and democracy.

Unfortunately, the British Government was never guided by a serious concern for the well-being of the Transjordan people. His Majesty's Government's interest in Transjordan was limited to the securing of bases for the defence of the oil and strategic interests of the British Empire. Owing to its proximity to the oil-fields of Iraq and Saudi Arabia and to the Suez Canal, Transjordan affords a convenient territory for a British bastion in the Middle East. And, since no military base is secure in a country where social unrest prevails, it became important to the British Government to see that no "subversive" doctrines should spread in Transjordan, that the economic and political structure remained stable and no social changes took place. All this resulted in the queer spectacle of a Socialist Government helping the reactionary, semi-feudal oligarchy of King Abdullah in the preservation of the existing order in the Middle East.

Britain's only achievement in Transjordan was the creation of a modern mechanised Arab army. With a remarkable perseverance British instructors have taught the Nomadic sons of the desert to drive mechanised vehicles, to fire long range artillery, to use guns, mortars and other weapons. The agriculturists of Transjordan do not use tractors, but the Arab Legion knows everything about the use of tanks. Mechanics and technicians are an unknown profession in Transjordan, but there is no shortage of people to man and maintain the mechanised units of the Legion. The Government of Transjordan has no money

for education and health services, but there are ample funds for the maintenance of the Legion, which costs nearly three quarters of the state budget. The people of Transjordan live in squalour and disease, but the Arab Legionnaires are well fed and splendidly attired, to the eternal glory of Great Britain and her Socialist Government.

### *THE WAR IN PALESTINE.*

The role of Transjordan as an instrument of British imperialism in the Middle East is particularly manifest in the conflict between Jewish Palestine and the Arab States.

The Jewish community in Palestine is the most progressive and dynamic force in the Middle East. In the course of 50 years of Zionist colonisation, the Jews have introduced new forms of agricultural and industrial production in Palestine. They have dried the swamps and converted derelict areas into fields and orchards. They have brought water to the desert and made arid land, neglected for centuries, fit again for human habitation. They have applied Western methods to the cultivation of land, introduced agricultural machinery, fertilisers and intensive forms of land economy. Electricity was brought into the country and new industries sprung up in the cities of the Holy Land. A powerful Labour movement, comprising over 50% of the Jewish population, was created and assumed the leadership of the Jewish community. Co-operatives were established in towns and villages and became the most important economic factors in the country. Education and health services were developed to a degree unprecedented in the Middle East. Complete adult suffrage and true democracy in communal and central administration were also introduced.

It is easy to understand the deep hostility of the Arab rulers towards this movement for the advancement and westernisation of the Middle East. The Arab Effendi, whose well-being rests on the exploitation of the fellahin, understands only too well that the economic and social development of the Middle East undermines the very foundations of his power over the toiling Arabs. Consequently he is bitterly opposed to any Labour organisation in his country, or to any movement for land reform, and uses the dormant xenophobia of the Arab masses to divert the social discontent towards an imaginary foreign enemy.

It is one of the ironies of history that in this fight against the westernisation of the Middle East, the Arab Effendi has found a faithful ally in the Socialist Government of Great Britain.

## GREAT BRITAIN AND PALESTINE.

Ever since the publication of the Palestine White Paper of 1939 Great Britain tried to buy the friendship of the Arab countries by preventing the creation of an independent Jewish state. Despite the fact that the British Labour Party was committed to the reversal of this policy, Mr. Bevin, the Labour Foreign Secretary, continued to appease the Arab states by sacrificing the interests of the Jews.

First, as a Mandatory, the British Government sought by a campaign of pressure and force to drive the Jews into accepting a minority status in a unitary state of Palestine. When this failed, Mr. Bevin appealed to the U.N.O. only to find that the Assembly decided by a large majority against him and recommended the partition of Palestine into two states — Jewish and Arab. The next stage was a campaign to obstruct the Palestine Partition Commission and to swing the United States against the Jewish State. This manoeuvre was at first highly successful. The Commission, deprived of any real authority, failed to carry out partition, and the American Administration, succumbing to Mr. Bevin's pressure, suddenly gave up the plan. Confident that, when left to themselves, the Arab Legion will easily subdue Jewish Palestine, the British Government gave up the Palestine Mandate on the 15th May, 1948. But in the last days of the Mandate, by a series of dramatic military victories, the Jews conquered the area allotted to them. The Jewish State of Israel was proclaimed on the very day that the British administration left Palestine.

As was expected, the Transjordan Arab Legion proved to be the strongest Arab fighting force in the war that ensued after the British evacuation of Palestine. The directing hand of the British Government could be easily discerned behind every move of the Legion. Contrary to repeated promises to withdraw the Arab Legion from Palestine before the British evacuation, the Legion was left in the country and became the spearhead of the Arab attack. Lavishly equipped and supplied with ammunition from the British arms dumps in the Middle East, the Arab Legion was responsible for the greater part of the damage to the towns and villages of Palestine, including the Old City of Jerusalem, which was continually shelled by the Legion's artillery. The whole plan of the campaign against the Jewish State was worked out by British Staff Officers. British grants -

in-aid continued to flow into Transjordan, as did British arms and equipment which were brought into the country "in accordance with the treaty obligations". To conciliate American public opinion a few British officers who were directly seconded by the British army were recalled, but the majority, including Glubb Pasha, the Legion's Commander-in-Chief, remained to direct the military activities of Transjordan.

In spite of all this, the Arab armies have been heavily defeated by the Jews. Jaffa, Haifa, Acre, Tiberias, Safad, Jenin and the whole of the new city of Jerusalem fell into Jewish hands, 330 Arab villages had to be abandoned, and the Arab Legion suffered severe losses (some 740 killed, 1,000 wounded and 200 prisoners).

### *THE FRUITS OF WAR.*

The disastrous results to the Arab States, of the war in Palestine, cannot be measured in terms of casualties alone. The whole economic life of these countries has been disorganised. Trade with Palestine, the most important customer of the Arab States, came to a complete standstill. Unemployment is rampant in Arab cities. Some 350,000 Palestinian Arabs left their homes in the Jewish parts of the country and swarmed into Arab territory and the neighbouring Arab States. Needless to say, this hungry and wretched multitude constitutes a problem which the Arab States are completely incapable of solving.

The Palestine war has brought nothing but misery to the Arabs of Transjordan, and of the other Arab Countries. The high cost of the war must fall upon the population, depressing still more their wretched standard of living.

Nor do the people of Transjordan stand to gain anything by the expansionist policy of their ruler who is encouraged by the British Government. The people of Transjordan are interested in the peaceful development of their country, in its agricultural and industrial progress, in improved conditions of work and life. The first essential for the progress of Transjordan is therefore the cessation of hostilities and the attainment of good relations with her neighbouring states. Peace with Israel on the basis of mutual respect and the recognition of the rights of both Jewish and Arab peoples to independent statehood is the only way to achieve this aim.

## THE FAILURE OF APPEASEMENT.

The complete failure of Mr. Bevin's Middle Eastern policy is now a matter of recorded history. The British alliance with the autocratic rulers and Effendis of the Middle East has not succeeded in preventing the establishment and consolidation of the Jewish State. The defeat of the Arab armies and the misery of the Arab people is now laid at the door of the British Government. "If Britain's enemies had guided her policy in the Middle East", says Mr. Jon Kimche, (Tribune, 23rd July, 1948), "they could have done no more to exclude British influence from this part of the world than did the men in Cairo, Amman, Jerusalem and Whitehall, who were actually responsible for this policy. Indeed, at present it would be an exaggeration to speak of any British influence at all."

When the Labour Government came into office it had a great chance of becoming the leader of progressive forces in the Middle East. All sincere friends of Great Britain hoped that the Labour Government would initiate a new policy towards the people of the Middle East, renounce the existing unequal treaties and assist in the creation of progressive regimes. Needless to say all this has remained a pious hope. Mr. Bevin preferred the good will of the Arab Princes to the gratitude of the Arab masses—a policy which has borne sour fruit in all the countries of the Middle East. The relations between Britain and Egypt have progressively deteriorated. Iraq has become a hot-bed of anti-British propaganda, and when Mr. Bevin succeeded in obtaining a favourable agreement with the Iraqi Government, both the government and the agreement were swept away by an upsurge of popular indignation. In Palestine, Mr. Bevin's policy succeeded in creating an unprecedented anti-British feeling among the Jewish population of the country, while the last chapter of this sorry story — the war between Israel and the Arab States, has converted the Arabs of Palestine into probably the greatest haters of Great Britain in the Middle East.

What will Britain do now? Will she continue to incite the Arab rulers to continue the fruitless struggle in Palestine or will she change her attitude and work towards peaceful settlement in the Middle East? Only the future can give the answer to this question.